



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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September 16, 2021

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight
101 State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairwoman Serpa:

Please accept the attached report as the State's most recent update on the RIBridges system, which covers the reporting period August 16, 2021 – September 15, 2021. This document provides monthly updates on the following topics:

- System performance and improvement
- RI Department of Human Services (DHS) Employee Training
- Pending Applications
- SNAP Timeliness and Lobby/DHS Call Center Summaries
- CCAP Off-Cycle Payments
- LTSS Interim Payments
- Correspondence with Federal Partners (if any)

We appreciate your continued advocacy on behalf of those we serve, your interest in the health of the RIBridges system and the progress made to address outstanding issues. As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Celia J. Blue".

Celia J. Blue, Interim Director



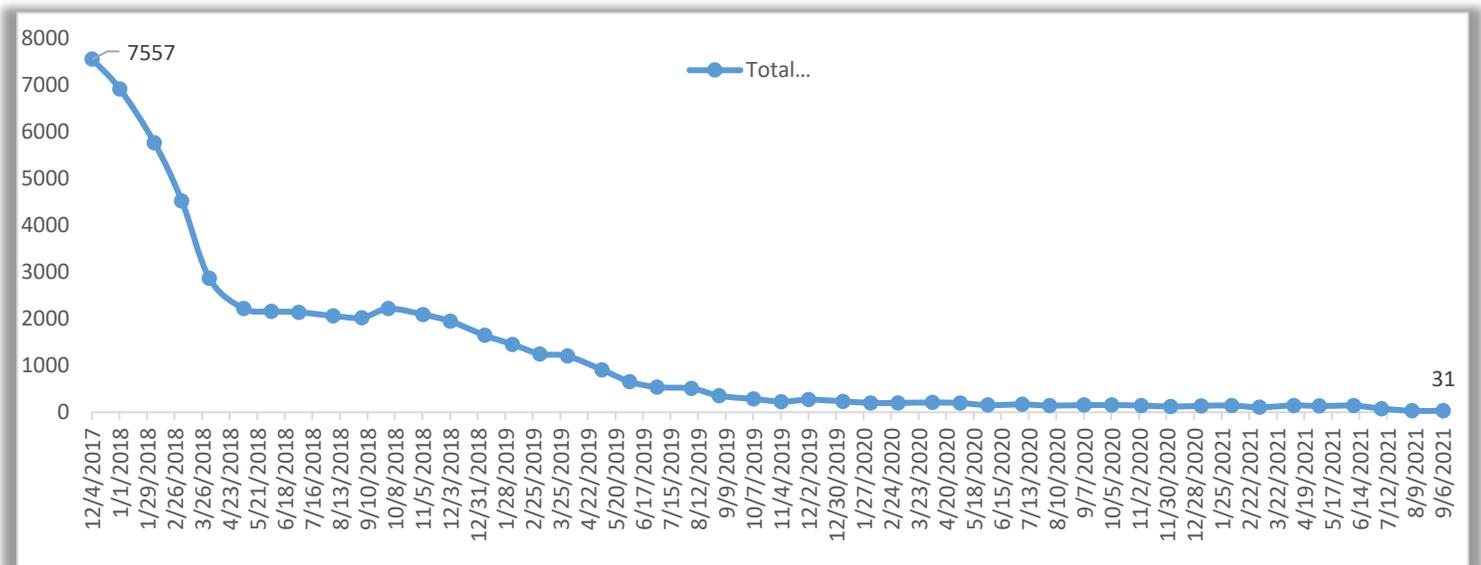
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

September 2021

Our team takes its charge seriously in promoting health, nurturing quality of life and being there for Rhode Islanders when needed. Our oversight of the work on the RIBridges system is an important part of the equation. With system stabilization under our belt, we continue to focus on ensuring full compliance of the system. This report provides an update on our efforts and progress to date.

SYSTEM PERFORMANCE + IMPROVEMENT

Due to a focused effort on consistent and stable system operations, the number of new and existing incidents (when the system does not operate as expected for a DHS customer, worker or provider) has **decreased by 99 percent** since December 2017. As of September 7, 2021, there were **31** open incidents.



DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since August, DHS hired 12 employees. This includes:

- 1 Assistant Administrator of Community and Planning Services dedicated to SNAP
- 1 Social Case Worker in the Long Term Services and Supports team
- 2 Clinical Training Specialists
- 1 Office Manager in the Providence Field Office
- 1 Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist in Child Care Licensing
- 1 Human Services Business Officer in Financial Management
- 1 Senior Human Services Business Officer in Financial Management
- 1 Assistant Director Financial & Contract Management
- 2 Customer Support Specialists in the Call Center
- 1 Administrator, Family and Adult Services the Long Term Services and Supports team

DHS TRAINING

Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
Multicultural Competency Training: Modules Two, Three and Four (Six one-and-half hour sessions)	8-18-2021 8-19-2021 8-24-2021 8-26-2021 8-30-2021 8-31-2021 9-1-2021	10.5	0	69
STAR Supervisor Training (Three two-hour sessions)	8-17-2021 8-24-2021 9-08-2021	6	0	9
SNAP Training Series (Seven two-hour sessions)	8-16-2021 8-18-2021 8-19-2021 8-20-2021 8-23-2021 8-24-2021 8-30-2021	14	0	9
Beacon Health Option Trainings (Four one-hour sessions)	8-16-2021 8-18-2021 8-23-2021 8-24-2021	4	0	51
Customer Relations Training Series (One two-hour sessions)	8-19-2021	2	0	22
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHS FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality 684 staff enrolled Telephonic Signature 32 staff enrolled Telephonic Signature - Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD) 17 staff enrolled Asset Verification System (AVS) 83 staff enrolled Customer Portal (424) 		0	Combined total of 797 staff trained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 426 Completed FTI 51 Completed AVS 14 Completed Telephonic Signature 206 Completed Customer Portal
Totals		35	0	957

** current number of staff trained is a duplicate number*

Workshop Descriptions

STAR Supervisor Training: This training was designed by supervisor for supervisors. The goals of the trainings are as follows:

- Instill the DHS Guiding Principles in everyday work
- Support supervisors by enhancing leadership, coaching and mentoring skills
- Build professional capacity through the DHS workforce
- Create tools that encourage and support a culture of continuous improvement
- Understand what constitutes good supervision
- Incorporate the DHS guiding principles in everyday work and decision making
- Resetting from past experiences and looking to the future of DHS
- Identifying behavioral styles

Multicultural Competency Training: The Multicultural Competence Modules offer contextualized, scaffolded anti-oppression educational workshops for DHS employees. There are four foundational modules that introduce participants to frameworks, concepts, and strategies so DHS personnel are better equipped to advance its diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic goals individually and collectively. The workshops are offered virtually. Each session meets for 1.5-2 hours. The format for the sessions includes facilitated dialogue with individual and group activities.

Module Two: Understanding Social Identity, Power and Privilege

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of social identity, power, and privilege. Special emphasis will be placed on social identity, power, and privilege in human services settings. Objectives of this session include:

- Defining the concept of social identity
- Exploring the major forms of social identity in the U.S.
- Describing the three processes of social identity
- Describing the systems of power, privilege and oppression
- Identifying one's position on the social identity scale and discuss implications for practice

Module Three: Disrupting Implicit Bias with Inclusive Behaviors in the Workplace

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of implicit bias. Special emphasis will be placed on implicit bias in human service settings. Objectives of this session include:

- Discussing the roots of bias
- Differentiating between explicit and implicit bias
- Presenting the common forms of implicit bias
- Identifying strategies to disrupt implicit bias using the multicultural change intervention matrix.

Module Four: Combating Microaggressions with Inclusive Language in the Workplace

Traditional notions of oppression hold that it is rare, occurring by a handful of rogue agents who intend to inflict harm on targets. However, it also occurs by well-meaning agents who convey unintentional, but no less harmful, "hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults." The effects of these indignities, coined microaggressions, are cumulative. The purpose of this interactive module will be to present and discuss the contours of microaggressions, offering examples of inclusive language to combat microaggressions as a target or a bystander. Objectives of this session include:

- Describing the origins of the term microaggressions (i.e., identity-based abuse)
- Differentiating between agents and targets of microaggressions
- Identifying the manifestations of microaggressions (e.g., intent vs impact)
- Delineating the three types of microaggressions
- Describing the consequences on targets
- Delineating select microaggression themes
- Outlining strategies for responding to microaggressions as a target or bystander

Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP): The SNAP Training is designed to introduce Eligibility Technicians to SNAP program policy and RIBridges. The virtual sessions are focused on SNAP policy.

Customer Relations Training: This training provides information for DHS staff members on strategies to build their customer service skills.

- **Session Three:** This unit pulls together all the key elements of the previous two sessions to understand what customers want and what they don't want and how to deliver them effectively, especially over the phone. The participants will explore what it takes to demonstrate empathy, be responsive and communicate clearly with their customers. Finally, we brainstorm what it takes to go beyond the customer expectation, creating an enthusiastically satisfying experience.

Beacon Health Option Trainings:

- **Collaborative Customer Service:** The goals and objective of this seminar are to understand the challenges of delivering great customer service through effective, professional customer service communication. We will discuss stress management related to working in customer service as well as final comments, action plans and evaluations.
- **Compassionate Leadership:** This training will give participants an in-depth look at how to lead with compassion. Attendees will learn the positive impact created by empathizing with the work force. This course will illustrate how genuinely caring for the people you lead fosters better feedback, professional development, and overall productivity.
- **Managing Fear and Anxiety Around COVID-19:** Fears and anxieties are made up of thoughts that are based upon either personal experiences or beliefs of the world today. Pretending that these thoughts and fears do not exist, or are not that bad, can make them worse. In this class, we will learn how to talk through our thoughts to realize that our fears and anxieties are manageable and controllable to get you through these challenging times.
- **Resiliency for Working Parents:** Today's working parent needs to build resiliency to prevent burnout. This class will give you the tools to manage stress while maintaining a sense of work and family life balance.

Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings: These trainings are self-directed. Staff are enrolled through the Learning Management System.

- **FTI/HIPAA:** This is a required training for all DHS employees. This refresher training covered the federal regulations and internal procedures that staff need to follow in protecting customer information.
- **Telephonic Signature/Telephonic Signature – EAD:** In order to work new documents such as applications, recerts, interims (with a change) and employment plans over the phone, it is imperative that either a signed document is present in the case file OR the worker records a telephonic signature while the customer is on the phone.
- **Asset Verification Training System:** This training provides guidance to staff processing EAD and LTSS requests for Medicaid determinations at the time of application and renewals.

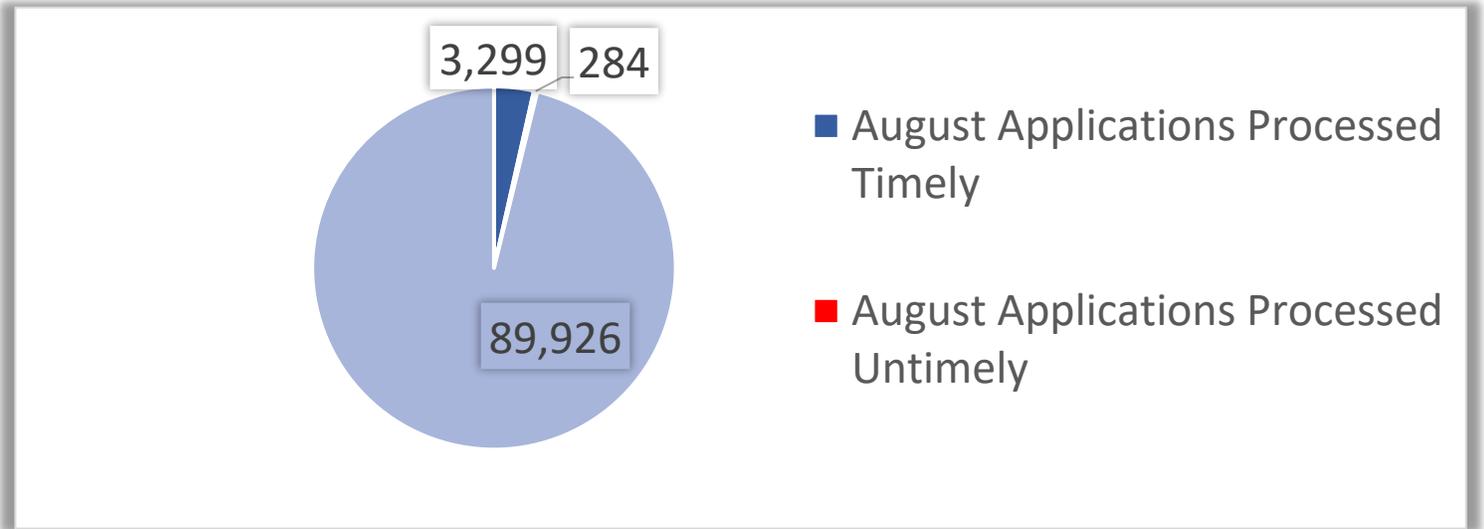
PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **September 8, 2021**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **3,513**. The total of overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **1,610**.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Expedited	21	18	39	4	20	24	63
SNAP Non-Expedited	446	325	771	8	4	12	783
CCAP	31	178	209	0	9	9	218
GPA Burial	0	1	1	0	1	1	2
SSP	0	42	42	0	3	3	45
GPA	14	30	44	20	21	41	85
RIW	85	96	181	8	15	23	204
Undetermined Medical	23	149	172	39	1,016	1,055	1,227
Medicaid-MAGI	8	22	30	24	31	55	85
MPP	7	67	74	9	384	393	467
Complex Medicaid	10	30	40	15	79	94	134
LTSS	9	163	172	1	27	28	200
Totals	654	1,121	1,775	128	1,610	1,738	3,513

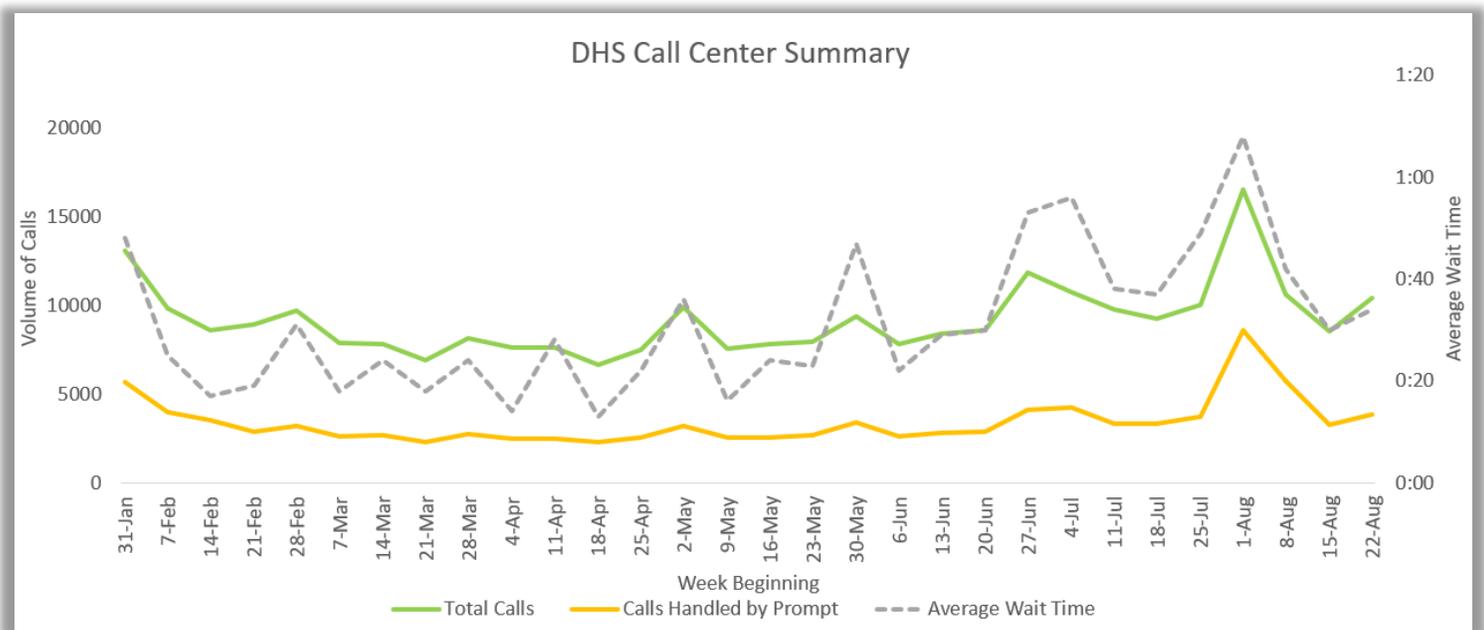
SNAP TIMELINESS

In August 2021, SNAP benefits were issued timely to **89,926** households. Despite the impact of COVID-19, **92** percent of new SNAP applications were timely processed. The number of applications not timely processed represents less than **1** percent of the SNAP population receiving benefits.



CALL CENTER

For the four-week period of **July 18, 2021 through the week that started on August 22, 2021**, the average wait time to DHS staff was about **43** minutes. The busiest week was the week beginning August 21st, and there were **16,546** calls then. With the close of lobby facing operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the DHS Call Center capacity was increased to accommodate customer interviews and questions regarding benefits.



CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers between July 16, 2021 through August 15, 2021.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
5	8/12/2021	484	\$2,253,075.16
5A	8/13/2021	22	\$78,376.28
5B	8/20/2021	28	\$32,259.75
6	8/26/2021	484	\$2,264,099.42
6A	8/27/2021	16	\$14,170.38
6B	9/3/2021	31	\$71,176.82

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (5, 5A, & 5B)	534	\$2,363,711.19
Off-cycle (5A & 5B)	50	\$110,636.03
Provider off-cycle/total	10.33%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.91%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (6, 6A & 6B)	531	\$2,349,446.62
Off-cycle (6A & 6B)	47	\$85,347.20
Provider off-cycle/total	9.71%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	3.77%	-

LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are **27** overdue LTSS applications pending State action.

Through the contingency process, which ensures nursing and assisted living facilities receive prompt reimbursement from the State, Rhode Island paid out approximately **\$ 1.75 million** in interim payments to facilities for the State Fiscal Year 2021. The fiscal year for 2022 began on July 1, 2021. We have paid out \$27,660 in interim payments to long term care facilities for the month of July, and \$0.0 dollars for August.

Our payment reconciliation process remains ongoing as we continue to meet with long term care facilities across the state. In total, the State has paid approximately **\$152 million**, and we have collected about **\$128 million** in reconciliation payments so far from nursing home facilities. This represents approximately **84** percent of the total amount of contingency payments made.

UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROCESS

The State has verified that Medicaid renewals were appropriately initiated by the RIBridges System in compliance with the CMS approved renewal plan.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are important partners to the State. We continue to communicate regularly to review progress with the RIBridges system. There wasn't any communication during this reporting period.